



Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine

Volume 10 *Expressions*

Article 24

5-1-2003

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Recommended Citation

Biegleson, Anna (2003) "My house...well...not really...", *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 10, Article 24.

Available at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol10/iss1/24

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My house...well...not really...

Anna Biegelsen

It all began shortly after my sixth birthday. My father decided to take on a small project – renovating and expanding the master bathroom. This seemed as if it should have been a simple task. It was, however, the beginning of a tragic saga.

Shortly after the tile and fixtures were removed from his shower, my father, whose mind was running rampant with ideas by this time, decided that the renovation should extend into his bedroom. I was evicted from the den-turned-bedroom that was my sixth birthday present so that my parents could move from their room. I had to live with my two younger sisters in their bedroom, a situation which I sullenly returned to. We were forced to share, to respect each other's space and belongings, and simply to get along without excessive quarreling.

Days turned into months and months turned into years. Two years, to be exact, and the bathroom was finished. That triumph, however, was miniscule compared to the complete renovation we were now in the midst of. At the four-year-mark, my mother took my sister and me on summer vacation to "give Dad a chance to finish." Or so we thought. We returned to find our house in further shambles. The mess was so overwhelming that we simply boxed up our belongings, put them in storage, and lived with only the necessities. We all learned to "rough it" so to speak, living in the

dust and grime that had built up through the years of “the project.”

By the time I was a freshman in high school, the house had been gutted. We moved into a small three-bedroom apartment where the term “close quarters” took on a whole new meaning for us. We had to communicate and cooperate with each other. This wasn’t always easy, but we managed to survive.

After living in the apartment for two years, we moved back into our house, which was now deemed suitable for basic living. Still, the house was, for the most part, unfinished. For instance the kitchen – or lack thereof. With no running water or appliances, resourcefulness was essential. The toaster oven became central to cooking and all dishes were washed in the master bathroom – the only finished room in the house. We grew to miss the traditional family dinner, having no table at which to break our bread.

Today, the house remains unfinished, lacking a few closet doors and outlet covers, unpainted, with exposed wires here and there. We did finally make a kitchen with running water, appliances, cabinet handles, you name it. I don’t regret the fact that most of my childhood memories are of the family in a jumbled house that wasn’t really a home because I’ve learned so many important lessons along the way. I’ve learned to communicate and cooperate with the people around me, even in trying circumstances. I developed the ability to adapt and be resourceful to survive in strange situations. Most importantly, I learned that “home” is not where the heart is; family is where the heart

truly lies. I appreciate the value of sitting down to a family dinner, whether home cooked or take-out from Boston Market. That is the real valuable in life – family.